

A TRIBUTE TO DICK SPEES

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, on Saturday, November 16, 2002, the city of Oakland will celebrate the remarkable career in public service of retiring Oakland City Councilmember Dick Spees, who has served on the council with grace, wit and distinction for 24 years. The celebration—2003: A Spees Odyssey will take place at the Chabot Space and Science Center in Oakland.

Councilmember Spees leaves a quarter-century legacy of service to his constituents, as well as council leadership on issues of economic development, marketing, good government, finance, quality of life, public safety, and regional planning.

Among his many accomplishments, he led local efforts to found Chabot Space & Science Center; Oakland-Sharing the Vision; Oakland Tours; the Bay Area Economic Forum; the Bay Area World Trade Center, and the Bay Area Bioscience Center.

He has led campaigns to pass bond measures that have purchased open space, built recreation centers, libraries and cultural facilities, and upgraded emergency response facilities and equipment.

As chair of the City Council's Rules Committee, Dick has shepherded campaign finance reform, the sunshine ordinance, the lobbyist registration ordinance and the formation of the public ethics commission. He has also spearheaded development of the city, State and Federal legislative programs and led advocacy efforts in Sacramento and Washington, DC.

A skilled negotiator, Dick has resolved many contentious issues in District 4 and in the city, including the expansion of Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream, Montclair Lucky Store, Fred Finch Youth Center, and Lincoln Child Center. He negotiated recent amendments to the Residential Rent Arbitration Program.

In the area of economic development, Councilmember Spees has led many of the city's marketing efforts, has collaborated on writing Oakland's telecommunications policy, and has initiated business attraction efforts for telecommunications, digital media, software, and bioscience companies. He has promoted economic development in District 4 through zoning changes, streetscape improvements, utility undergrounding, and outreach to interested developers.

Throughout his career, Dick has represented Oakland on Bay Area regional agencies. He currently serves on the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Area Economic Forum, the Regional Airport Planning Committee, the Bay Area World Trade Center, Oakland Base Reuse Authority, and co-chairs the City-Port Liaison Committee and the BAR T-Oakland Airport Connector Stakeholders Committee.

The people of Oakland are losing a remarkable public servant in Dick Spees, but I suspect that his heart will never be far from the people he has rep-

resented so well for so long. I wish the very best to him and his wife Jean.●

NATIONAL SPINA BIFIDA
AWARENESS MONTH

• Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize that October is National Spina Bifida Awareness Month and to pay tribute to the more than 70,000 Americans, and their family members, who are currently affected by Spina Bifida, the nation's most common, permanently disabling birth defect.

Spina Bifida affects more than 4,000 pregnancies each year, with more than half ending tragically in abortion. Each year 1500 babies are born with Spina Bifida, a terrible condition in which the spine does not close completely during the first few weeks of pregnancy. The result of this neural tube defect is that most babies suffer from a host of physical, psychological, and educational challenges, including paralysis, developmental delay, numerous surgeries, and living with a shunt in their skulls in an attempt to ameliorate their condition. After decades of poor prognoses and short life expectancy, due to breakthroughs in research, combined with improvements in health care and treatment children with Spina Bifida are now living long enough to become adults with the condition. However, with this extended life expectancy people with Spina Bifida now face new challenges education, job training, independent living, health care for secondary conditions, aging concerns, and other related issues.

Therefore, we must do more to ensure a high quality of life for people with Spina Bifida so more families choose the blessing and joy of having a child with this condition. Fortunately, Spina Bifida is no longer the death sentence it once was and now most people born with Spina Bifida will likely have a normal or near normal life expectancy. The challenge now is to ensure that these individuals have the highest quality of life possible.

One of my constituents, sixteen year-old Gregory Pote, is one of the 70,000 Americans who live with Spina Bifida. Gregory had the pleasure of visiting Capitol Hill this summer to hear his uncle testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families' hearing on "Birth Defects: Strategies for Prevention and Ensuring Quality of Life." Greg's uncle, Hal Pote, President of the Spina Bifida Foundation, testified that one of his proudest moments was the morning that their family awoke before the crack of dawn and gathered together on the side of a street in Philadelphia to watch Greg carry the Olympic torch earlier this year. Despite this amazing accomplishment, it is important to note that at the age of sixteen Greg has already had more than twenty surgeries. It is my understanding that double-digit numbers for surgeries unfortunately are not unusual for children living with

this condition. Therefore, it is essential that we do more to prevent and reduce suffering from Spina Bifida and take all the steps we can to ensure that Greg and the 70,000 other Americans like him who live with Spina Bifida every day can have the most productive and full lives possible.

I would like to commend the Spina Bifida Association of America, SBAA, an organization that has helped people with Spina Bifida and their families for nearly 30 years, works every day, not just in the month of October, to prevent and reduce suffering from this devastating birth defect. The SBAA puts expecting parents in touch with families who have a child with Spina Bifida, and these families answer questions and concerns and help guide expecting parents. The SBAA then works to provide lifelong support and assistance for affected children and their families.

During the month of October the SBAA and its chapters make a special push to increase public awareness about Spina Bifida and teach prospective parents about prevention. Simply by taking a daily dose of the B vitamin, folic acid, found in most multivitamins, women of childbearing age have the power to reduce the incidence of Spina Bifida by up to 75 percent. That such a simple change in habit can have such a profound effect should leave no question as to the importance of awareness and the impact of prevention.

In addition, I would like to commend my Senate colleagues for allocating \$2 million in much-needed funding for a National Spina Bifida Program at the National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, NCBDDD, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, to ensure that those individuals living with Spina Bifida can live active, productive, and meaningful lives. I also am very proud that we in the Senate recently passed by unanimous consent the bipartisan "Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Prevention Act of 2002," which takes many critical steps that will work to prevent Spina Bifida and to improve quality of life for individuals and families affected by this terrible birth defect.

I again thank the SBAA and its chapters for their commitment to improve the lives of those 70,000 individuals living with Spina Bifida throughout our Nation. I also wish to thank two nationally respected television journalists, Judy Woodruff and Al Hunt for their caring, meaningful leadership in this important cause. In conclusion, I wish the Spina Bifida Association of America the best of results in its endeavors, and urge all of my colleagues and all Americans to support its important efforts.●